

Montana Stream Protection Timeline: 1956–1978

1956 Congress passes the Federal Highway Administration Act.

1959 Montana Fish and Game designates “blue-ribbon” streams.

1962 Fish and Game begins a comprehensive study of 13 streams across the state.

1961 State fisheries officials devise a three-part stream preservation strategy.

1963 Controversy over construction of I-15 in Wolf Creek Canyon.

1963 Legislature passes the **Montana Stream Protection Act**. Legislation written to last two years.

1965 Montana Legislature overwhelming approves permanent version of the Stream Protection Act.

1969 Legislature passes the **Montana Water Quality Act**.

1972 Congress passes the **Clean Water Act**.

1972 The newly ratified **Montana Constitution** includes a provision guaranteeing Montanans a “clean and healthful environment.”

1973 Legislature passes the **Montana Water Use Act**. The law specifically defines, for the first time, fish and wildlife as a beneficial use of state waters and authorizes maintenance of minimum flows for fish.

1975 Legislature passes the **Montana Natural Streambed and Land Preservation Act**, which requires private landowners to apply for a “310 permit” if considering stream alterations.

1978 Montana Board of Natural Resources and Conservation rules that 5.5 million acre-feet of instream flows on the Yellowstone River and 67 tributaries should be perpetually reserved for the good of fish and wildlife.